

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction (TEDRI): Issues and Challenges

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Abstract—English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers are under pressure to address today's educational demands, such as the use of digital technology in the classroom and the need to improve students' literacy skills. To shed light on these matters, this study examines the EFL teachers' perceptions of implementing Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction (TEDRI) in the classroom and explores how teachers are adapting to its use. Interview data were collected from six EFL teachers. The findings show that teachers perceive the implementation of TEDRI to be positive overall. However, some teachers also face difficulties in applying TEDRI, such as the need to adjust their reading instruction methods as well as a lack of experience in integrating technology in TEDRI.

Index Terms—TEDRI, EFL, technology in teaching, teacher's perceptions

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the use of technology in the field of education has seen rapidly evolving changes, especially since 2019 and the onslaught of the COVID-19 global pandemic (Alutaybi & Alfares, 2023) when the demands of those days required teachers to modify their teaching strategies by employing technology as a teaching and learning platform (Akhter, 2020). Since then, technology is believed to have brought with it several benefits for students. First, it helps to provide students with abundant sources; it enables open discussion; and it can help learners better understand the material (Alfaruque et al., 2002). Technology also helps to increase student engagement in the learning process and helps them focus on the learning material (Yunus et al., 2013). Moreover, Carver (2016) claims that technology can boost students' motivation, attitude, engagement, and self-confidence while enhancing their learning abilities. In summary, utilizing technology in the educational setting is beneficial to improving teaching and learning outcomes.

The issue of employing technology in education is clarified in SDG 4 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stresses education equality with regard to gender, access, and the availability of facilities for all children worldwide (Sustainable Development Goals, nd). As ideal as that might sound, however, teachers face challenges in achieving this goal. To attain SDG 4, the number of teachers, the quality of teachers, school infrastructure, and digital literacy awareness must be taken into consideration (Martin, 2023). Additionally, Garib (2022) states that the EFL teachers will encounter certain obstacles in integrating technology into their teaching practice, such as inadequate infrastructure or unreliable internet connections. West (2012) claims that, in utilizing technology, teachers need to take on a significant role as an instructor and a consultant that includes offering other assessments beyond the annual standardized tests in school.

In Indonesia, technology application in education is implicitly addressed in the new curriculum, known as the "Freedom to Learn Curriculum," which is the continuation of an emergency curriculum that was developed in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes in the curriculum introduced Indonesia to a new learning paradigm that focuses on providing teachers with the autonomy they need to choose learning materials and allows students the freedom to learn innovatively and creatively (Wijayanti, 2023). According to the Freedom to Learn Curriculum, one of the conditions of the learning process is allowing the teachers to use differentiated learning based on students' abilities (Indonesia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). Thus, teachers are required to use technology to implement differentiated learning in the classroom (Indonesia Directorate of Elementary Education Teachers, 2022). However, the use of technology for

educational purposes in Indonesia is not yet as optimal as it should be. Onitsuka et al. (2018) mention that the lack of a digital infrastructure in Indonesia has led to a digital gap among its people. Furthermore, vocational teachers in Indonesia are reported to have low technological competence (Motahhari et al., 2021).

On the other hand, researchers also highlight the importance of the students' abilities in the learning process. In the current educational flow, literacy in education is a substantial skill that helps students live and participate in society. Literacy is defined by experts as the capacity to effectively read, write, and interact with others (Cahyana et al., 2023). Thus, it is necessary for students to possess the ability to obtain information through reading. Several researchers (Afdaleni, 2017; Rahmawati et al., 2020; Windisch, 2016) claim that students must have the basic ability to understand, analyze, and draw conclusions with regard to various texts in order to understand complex information and improve their engagement levels. Consequently, teachers need to help students become strategic readers who are capable of comprehending a wide variety of texts (Moreillon, 2007). That is where differentiated reading instruction (DRI) comes in.

DRI can help students become proficient readers by providing students with customized exercises based on their diverse needs. Thus, technology-enhanced differentiated reading instruction can have a significant impact on the development of students' reading skills. Technology in reading class is useful for creating a comfortable and supportive reading environment for students that can stimulate them to process comprehensible input (Tasneem, 2022). The aim of this study is to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of technology-enhanced differentiated reading instruction (TEDRI). The findings of this research will provide a better understanding of EFL teachers' beliefs concerning TEDRI and how it is reflected in their teaching practice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction*

Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) refers to the integration of information and communication technology into the teaching and learning process (Kirkwood & Price, 2014) and is regularly used in the UK, Europe, and other regions around the world. Furthermore, Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction (TEDRI) is specifically designed to teach critical reading skills to senior high school EFL students. The International Reading Association (2000) explains that differentiated instruction can only be achieved if teachers master the effective reading instruction technique and understand their students and their range of needs. At the same time, the implementation of differentiated reading instruction can be challenging for teachers as there are many things to consider, such as assessment, grouping formats, classroom management, preparation of materials, the length and frequency of instruction, and lesson focus (Ankrum & Bean, 2008). Assessment is a significant element that teachers must be able to perform in order to provide students with appropriate, needs-based instruction (Cekiso, 2017).

Subsequently, teachers must also consider grouping formats so that grouping is flexible and can address the needs of all students in the classroom (Ford, 2005). Teachers must arrange groups effectively so that students can achieve the best possible outcomes. Thus, classroom management is pivotal to keeping all students actively involved in the learning process. The next step is for teachers to carefully select the material that students will find enjoyable and beneficial (Karagianni et al., 2023; Soraya et al., 2022). Having selected the material, teachers then need to consider the length and frequency of instruction, which should be flexible over time based on students' needs and abilities. The last aspect is lesson focus, which requires teachers to determine which reading comprehension skills should be emphasized before and during the learning process (Ankrum & Bean, 2008).

B. *Teacher Perception of TEDRI*

One of the challenges of integrating technologies is teachers' beliefs in using them since these will impact their classroom practice (Ertmer, 2005). Barcelos (2003) posits that teachers' perceptions will influence their teaching processes in the classroom. In discussing the perception of a teacher, we tend to automatically link it with teachers' knowledge and skill (Ertmer, 2005). Indeed, teachers' perceptions and knowledge are closely connected and shape their teaching (Baker, 2010). Nevertheless, while teachers' roles in TEDRI are mainly to instruct students by employing technology and 'leaving no students behind,' teachers also have to focus on students' needs, which they can then integrate into practice.

Implementation of TEDRI might be challenging if teachers lack in-depth knowledge of the reading process or lack the capacity to teach responsively. Gaitas and Martins (2016) claim that teachers find it difficult to implement differentiated instruction. Wright (2018) examined teachers' perceptions of the use of individualized differentiated instruction in planning, teaching, and carrying out professional responsibilities and noted that teachers' professional development is crucial to dealing with challenges in implementing differentiated instruction to the students. Additionally, the findings of the current study also revealed that teachers still lack professional training, which includes knowledge of how to plan individualized lessons; they also have insufficient time to implement the TEDRI technique as well as the differentiated instruction technique. Similarly, in their article "The Nature of Cooperative Learning and Differentiated Instruction Practice in English Class," Ismail and Al Allaq (2019) examined the teachers' views on the effectiveness of cooperative learning and differentiated learning in improving students' English skills. The result of their study showed that

collaborative learning is beneficial to improving student engagement during the learning process; moreover, it enhances student responsiveness regarding social and cultural issues, and it facilitates the capacity of teachers to provide differentiated instruction.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Method

This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was used to explore how a “subject” perceives something, such as an event, a relationship, a program, an emotion, and so on (Leedy, 1997). Furthermore, this study explores the phenomenon of the perceptions of EFL teachers toward implementing Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction (TEDRI). Since it will enable the researcher to learn more about the practice of TEDRI in the classroom and the teachers’ experiences in its implementation, the phenomenological research design is the most suitable approach for this study.

B. Participants

The participants of this research comprised six EFL teachers in Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) Taruna Nusantara. (“Sekolah Menengah Atas” is Bahasa for “Senior High School” in English.) This study examined all of the EFL teachers in SMA Taruna Nusantara to gain insight into their teaching practice using TEDRI and their understanding of it. EFL teachers in SMA Taruna Nusantara were selected due to the school environment, adequate facilities for students’ learning processes, and the different types of students enrolled in this school. Participants in this study included three females and three males, with an average age of 40.

C. Instrument

Data were collected for this phenomenological study by analyzing the interviews with teachers on their perceptions about implementing TEDRI into their curriculum. A semi-structured, in-depth interview was deemed to be the most appropriate approach in this study because it could provide deep insight into teachers’ viewpoints. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for data analysis. The interview included the following questions:

1. What do you think about teaching using TEDRI?
2. Describe the teaching you have implemented using TEDRI.
3. Can you share your thoughts on what impact TEDRI may have had on your students’ learning?
4. What challenges and successes did you experience using TEDRI in your teaching?
5. How did you overcome these challenges?

D. Procedure

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of participants in implementing TEDRI. Once the interviews were transcribed, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a suitable method for analyzing the data, as it helps to provide a thorough analysis. The steps of thematic data analysis comprise gathering the data, gaining familiarization with the data, finding themes or patterns, reviewing the themes or patterns, naming the themes, and finally, producing a report (Braun & Clark, 2006). Figure 1 describes the five steps of the procedure.



Figure 1. Procedure for Producing the Data

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching TEDRI

After analyzing the data from the interviews, the researcher discovered two prominent themes, namely the benefits and challenges of TEDRI. These themes were then broken down into subthemes, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THE EFL TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED DIFFERENTIATED READING INSTRUCTION (TEDRI)

Benefit	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes student engagement. • Improves students’ reading competency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties in adjusting the reading instructions to meet the students’ needs. • Lack of teachers’ expertise in using technology.

The analysis also revealed that the teachers' perceptions regarding the benefit of TEDRI could be divided into two subthemes: "Promote Student Engagement" and "Improves Student Reading Competency".

(a). *Promotes Student Engagement*

Most of the teachers expressed that the implementation of TEDRI had a positive impact on student engagement in the classroom. The following are the comments from the interview with T1, T2, and T4:

Teacher 1: "I see my students' enthusiasm and eagerness for learning when I use TEDRI in my class."

Teacher 2: "I think TEDRI is very helpful for the students because it can improve students' reading skills, and also, while implementing TEDRI, the students look so enthusiastic."

Teacher 4: "As I observed my class, I found that my students are more interested in learning reading using TEDRI compared to the traditional teaching, and they are also very active during the learning process."

(b). *Improves Student Reading Competency*

Most of the teachers agree that TEDRI can improve students' reading skills. Comments from Teachers 3 and 5 are shown below:

Teacher 3: "I once asked my students about TEDRI, and they said that TEDRI is an effective way for them to practice reading, which directs them to understand more about the content of a text."

Teacher 5: "I think it is helpful for students to get better understanding in reading."

Furthermore, Teacher 6 also added a statement regarding the benefits of TEDRI; T6 commented as follows:

Teacher 6: "I think TEDRI is very useful to help the students get various texts and abundant exercise from the internet, although it's quite challenging for me to find the most suitable one."

Those comments sum up how TEDRI is beneficial for student participation as well as their knowledge acquisition. Additionally, Teacher 6 pointed out that TEDRI will provide the students with abundant reading content and sufficient exercises that are helpful in improving their reading comprehension.

B. Challenges in Implementing TEDRI

The analysis of teachers' experiences also revealed that teachers expressed a few challenges concerning implementation of TEDRI in the classroom. Analysis of the interview results revealed two main sub-themes: "Difficulties in adjusting the reading instruction to meet students' needs and 2) lack of teachers' expertise in using technology.

(a). *Difficulties in Adjusting the Reading Instruction to Meet Student Needs*

According to the interview results, teachers face difficulties with adjusting reading instruction. Teachers 1 and 2 had the following to say:

Teacher 1: "When it comes to TEDRI steps, I think the most challenging process is to adjust the instruction with the students' needs and characteristics."

Teacher 2: "I do have a problem with the procedure of TEDRI itself, where there is a step that we need to choose a suitable reading instruction to cater to all the student's needs."

Teachers 4 and 5 added the following comments:

Teacher 4: "In order for a certain technique to have an optimal result, it is important for the teacher to know exactly how the process should be held. My problem is I am not really understanding the steps in TEDRI. Furthermore, it is difficult to implement TEDRI because I need to plan differentiated reading instruction meeting after meeting and class after class to adjust with the needs of the students. I think it is time-consuming."

Teacher 5: "For me, it is quite hard to apply because I have to pay extra attention to every need and strength of my students so that the outcome will be optimal."

The difficulties in adjusting reading instruction are believed to be a challenge for some teachers in implementing TEDRI. As Teacher 4 expressed, the preparations involved in TEDRI implementation take a great deal of time.

(b). *Lack of Teachers' Expertise in Using Technology*

Three of the English teachers at Taruna Nusantara Senior High School are highly experienced teachers who have taught English for over 25 years. Teacher 3, Teacher 5, and Teacher 6 stated that they were having difficulties implementing educational technologies in their classroom, as shown below:

Teacher 3: "I realize that, nowadays, students' lives are closely related to the use of technology. When I use TEDRI in my class, honestly, I am having difficulties in integrating technology into the learning process."

Teacher 5: "As we know, in implementing TEDRI, it is essential for teachers to use technology as a medium in classroom teaching. It seems that I lack understanding of the use of educational technology; I do not know much about apps or websites to support my teaching."

Teacher 6: "I think I still need to learn more about the use of technology in the learning process because I do not understand it enough, especially when it comes to TEDRI implementation in my classroom."

In contrast, the other three teachers are more skilled and willing to adopt technology in their teaching processes. Those three teachers are categorized as novice teachers (having under 10 years of teaching experience), compared to the three previous teachers. The following are comments from Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 4, respectively:

Teacher 1: "I see that the students' participation is better when I use TEDRI in the classroom, so I try to plan the best-suited instruction and technology to meet my students' needs."

Teacher 2: "I don't have any problem when I implement TEDRI in my classroom. I can use many technologies as learning aids that include blogs, wikis, and social networking sites freely and flexibly."

Teacher 4: "The learning process is more interesting when I use technology since the students can get plenty of reading content from web pages, online articles, and so on."

The perspectives of novice teachers differ from those of more experienced teachers, who struggle with modern education in terms of using technology in TEDRI implementation. However, all of the teachers admitted that applying TEDRI in the teaching and learning process offered some benefits.

C. Overcoming the Challenges

The findings revealed that some teachers faced obstacles in adjusting reading instruction for students and applying technology in the classroom. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 emphasized that it is essential for teacher to constantly learn new teaching techniques in order to improve their teaching quality. As Teacher 1 stated:

Teacher 1: "Nowadays, in the educational setting, many teaching techniques appear. As an educator, it is very important for us to always learn the learning techniques to improve our teaching quality. TEDRI is one of the teaching strategies that I've proven to be successful in my class. Therefore, I hope teachers will always have the desire to learn and investigate TEDRI as well as any other effective teaching technique to support the students' learning."

In alignment with the teacher's statement above, Selvi (2010) and Triana and Rugaiyah (2023) also believed that teachers need to expand their knowledge to improve their teaching based on the demand of today's educational era. Furthermore, improving teachers' digital competences is also key to adapting to the changing circumstances in the educational field (Kováčiková & Kic-Drgas, 2023). As Teacher 6 explains:

Teacher 6: "I believe that TEDRI can improve my students' reading rates. Thus, I want to improve my ability to use technology to support the learning. I think teacher digital training is very important for me to improve my ability to use technology and to be familiar with it."

The statement above is also supported by a previous study (Al-Barakat et al., 2023), which found that teachers need to follow training courses with a focus on the use of digital learning as a valuable educational tool, which can then be integrated into their teaching practice.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the implementation of Technology-Enhanced Differentiated Reading Instruction (TEDRI) in Taruna Nusantara Senior High School. The results of the data analysis revealed two broad themes, namely the benefits and the challenges of TEDRI. The first theme contains two subthemes: student engagement in the classroom and student reading comprehension. Similarly, the second theme comprised two subthemes concerning the challenges of TEDRI implementation: difficulties in adjusting reading instruction and lack of teachers' experience in using technology.

The first finding revealed that teachers' perceptions of using TEDRI in the learning process did not differ significantly. All teachers perceived the use of TEDRI to be positive, and they acknowledged TEDRI as being beneficial for students in terms of improving their skills and participation in the class. The second finding was that teachers faced some difficulties in applying TEDRI in the classroom. Moreover, this study highlighted two subthemes regarding the challenges that teachers encountered regarding the implementation of TEDRI: having to adjust reading instruction based on students' needs and teachers' lack of experience in using educational technology. These findings suggest the need for teachers to improve their TEDRI implementation. Professional training can facilitate their understanding of TEDRI implementation as well as the use of technology in the educational setting. Teacher training, especially in the use of technology, can bring about a more conducive learning environment. This is also in line with Alyoussef and Omer (2023), who found that using technology as a medium elicits a strong desire in students to learn a subject in an effective manner.

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